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**Making Veterans Healthy Again-One TBI/PTSD Veteran at a Time**  
**"Care for Him Who Shall Have Borne the Battle" Abraham Lincoln**

In 1942, a young Ronald D. Ray was born in Hazard, Kentucky of Scot Irish parentage. The Rays were people of the mountains where they lived and served as physicians and pharmacists. Ron was born during World War II while his father served in the Navy. Pharmacist mate Robert Wallace Ray took care of the Marines and brought home tales of their daring-do inspiring his young blonde blue-eyes son to one day become a United States Marine.

After the war, the Rays relocated and Ron spent his early life enjoying the halcyon days of the 1950s in a peaceful suburb of Louisville, Kentucky. After high school, he attended Centre College in Danville, Kentucky lettered in baseball and enlisted in the US Marine Corps PLC program to make his early dreams a reality - to become a Marine officer.

At graduation Ron was commissioned at his college graduation and after a quick mission in the Dominican Republic, he was deployed to Vietnam "to fight communism as far away as possible." Ron, even as a young man, understood the reasons given for this difficult duty. Early in the war, Marine "advisors" played a critical role in supporting South Vietnamese forces coordinating naval and air gunfire, but the mission evolved over time. As U.S. involvement deepened, advisors became integral to the fighting against the Viet Cong. Ron was awarded a purple heart and two silver stars, but he couldn't ultimately appreciate the consequences of the explosions and blast waves. The young Captain Ray returned from Vietnam in April 1968, bearing the invisible wounds of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and, while his visible wounds were treated and healed, he didn't connect his "readjustment blues," to his service in Vietnam and neither did anyone else until it was very late.

After his military service Ron carried on by graduating from law school and was appointed to the Pentagon to lead the National Guard and Reserves during the Reagan years. He was appointed to the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program (VVLP) was initiated under President Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, as part of Reagan's commitment to honoring Vietnam veterans and helping them reintegrate into society. The idea was to recruit two successful Vietnam veterans from each U.S. state to serve as visible role models and leaders, showing that Vietnam vets could be successful, responsible citizens and community leaders despite the stigma many faced and now we know the untreated invisible injuries they carried home.

One could say Ron worked through the "readjustment blues" by leading in the effort to remember the Kentuckians, who gave all in the jungles of Vietnam. The Kentucky memorial today is an award winning "sundial" designed by Navy Aviator and Lexington architect Helm Roberts. After many precise calculations, Helm's design lists all the Kentucky fallen in Georgia granite as the gnomon casts its shadow on the name of the fallen on the date of his death. Ron was witness to the controversy over incorporating the humanizing statue of the soldiers alongside the funerary wall in DC. Ron spoke across the state to raise awareness for the war's noble cause, the heroism of so many, and raised over a million dollars as he followed the largely unprecedented move for vets to build their own war memorials, funded by private donors. He worked closely with Helm to produce the stunning design to reflect their experience. Ron added the Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 to the backside of the gnomon where time isn't marked:

To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted;  
A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

There seems a more detail here than needed, but in retrospect Ron could be said to have managed his invisible wounds as he traveled, talked to audiences both large and small interpreting the war experience for his fellow Kentuckians and himself? Ron was recognized by Patrick Hagopian, a British scholar in his book on the Vietnam memorial phenomenon and cited the Frankfort memorial is likely the most remarkable. However, Hagopian did cast Ron as a bit of a war monger, when quite the opposite is true of most military men who know the terrible cost of war and would much rather exhaust all other means to resolve a conflict. Ron became acquainted with those, who confirmed for him Nixon hadn't brought all the POWs home. With great controversy, he fought for the POW-MIA flag flown over the memorial, but there is always controversy over the historical record and Kentucky was no exception.

Ron was possessed of great energy and capacities never expressing concern that he was slipping or that he would succumb to TBI and PTSD all likely complicated by Agent Orange which decades later was diagnosed as Lewy body dementia, Alzheimer's and ALS. His doctor at the Atlanta Amen Clinic suggested a low inflammatory diet and Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatments (HBOT). When we returned to Louisville and presented two prescriptions for HBOT to the local hospital for oxygen treatments, Ron was denied because his condition, unlike strokes, diabetic foot ulcers, burns, etc., wasn't covered by the FDA. Even though his doctors said he was at a disadvantage due to the age of his brain and the injuries being so old, we traveled to Florida and to Panama to get a few treatments. Ron's brother-in-law, Eric Koleda, joined with his wife Eunice is seeking legislative relief for all Kentucky veterans with invisible injuries to ensure they would not be turned away from oxygen treatments in local hospitals, where burn units are often outfitted with chambers.

Ron's decline spanned eight years, and he succumbed to his decades-old wounds on July 6, 2020. As a man who spoke often for others without a voice, it was time to bind up the hurt and loss and carry on speaking for vets whose lives are stopped or stymied by invisible wounds, most not realizing the causes. HBOT4KYVETS was incorporated by Air Force veteran Eric Koleda in honor of the Kentucky veterans, who bore the battle, to receive timely and effective treatment for their invisible wounds.

As a final tribute, Ron was a diligent student of history and government throughout his life seeking to understand the forces, both foreign and domestic, that purposed war in Vietnam. His collection of books numbers between 8000 - 10,000 and his many papers are in a scanned and digitized archive. At this writing, most of the books are scanned and an AI librarian is under development for future generations to search his curated collection of books and papers.

Why? Most of the current generation has little understanding of the war, the history and the continuing outcome today, for as Falkner more recently said, history isn't past, it really isn't over or as Solomon said millennia ago: There is no new thing under the sun. History is a great teacher and its lessons never fade. Let us never forget the horrors of war and those who go for us and never really return. Their lives are forever enriched, but their bodies too often degraded. Some obviously so, others not. Let the word continue in memory of Colonel Ronald D. Ray, USMC, through HBOT4KYVETS and the Colonel Ronald D. Ray Library of American History.